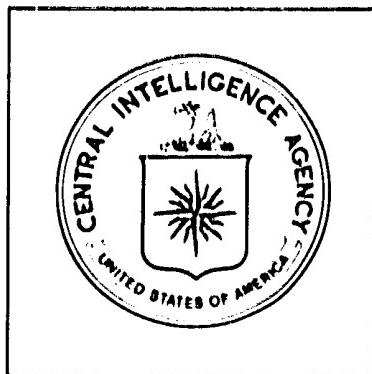


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SOVIET UNION - EASTERN EUROPE



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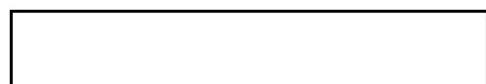
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Moscow's Reaction to Release of Crewmen

Moscow has thus far reacted cautiously to China's decision to release the three Soviet helicopter crewmen. Soviet media have carried only brief factual reports on Peking's move and the arrival of the crew in Moscow. They do not convey the impression that the Chinese have done anything dramatic, but the number of other negative items on China has dropped off in the past few days.

Soviet embassy officials in Peking, however, are obviously pleased about the release, professing to see in China's behavior a major conciliatory gesture. The Soviets told US officials that they were surprised by the Chinese action and were particularly struck by what they saw as an apologetic tone in the announcement.

Assuming the Soviets were taken by surprise, they will probably now probe for Chinese flexibility on the more substantive issues that divide them. This could involve a comparable gesture by Moscow:

--Soviet officials in Peking are already discounting the importance of Moscow's revelation two weeks ago that China holds three additional Soviets who allegedly "inadvertently" strayed across the border. They maintain--unlike Soviet officials in Moscow--that the three may in fact have been defectors.

--The Soviets' chief negotiator at the border talks, who was brought home last May, might be sent back to Peking. (Moscow may have been planning to make what has become an annual go at the talks anyway.)

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[Redacted]

--Moscow could make some concession so that the annual river navigation talks can get under way. No navigation talks were held in 1975--for the first time in 20 years--because this time Peking demanded prior agreement on inclusion of territorial questions on the agenda.

East European diplomats in Peking are speculating that Peking timed the release to influence the Soviet party congress that is set to open in February. They conjecture that Peking hopes to forestall any move toward a harder line policy toward China.

While this reasoning greatly exaggerates support for a more bellicose China policy within Kremlin councils, the Soviet leadership in the past has made an effort to avoid appearing as the intransigent partner to the dispute. Prior to the last congress in 1971, Moscow made a new offer on the border dispute, a non-use-of-force proposal, and an appeal for consultations on Indochina.

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Kosygin's Visit to Turkey

Soviet Premier Kosygin's good-will visit to Turkey was short on substance, but did improve the atmosphere between Moscow and Ankara.

In the communique issued at the end of the visit, the USSR and Turkey said they intend to prepare a "political document" on friendly relations and cooperation. This appears to be an attempt by the Turks to sidestep Moscow's oft-made proposal for a treaty of friendship and cooperation. It may involve no more than a reiteration of the declaration of principles the two sides signed during Soviet President Podgorny's visit in 1972.

The new document is to be signed at a high-level meeting in the near future. This suggests that Turkish Prime Minister Demirel will pick up Kosygin's invitation and visit Moscow next year.

Moscow and Ankara appear to have prevented the Cyprus issue from becoming a bone of contention. They reiterated their positions, and the opaque language in the communique succeeded in concealing their differences.

During the visit, Kosygin dedicated the first stage of the Iskenderun steel plant. Both sides pledged to strengthen their economic ties, but no new agreements were announced.

In addition to his discussions with top government leaders, Kosygin met with opposition leader Bulent Ecevit, and seemed to devote particular attention to him at a dinner given by Demirel. The Soviets, who had commented favorably on Ecevit's policies while he was in office, undoubtedly calculate that the former prime minister has a good chance to return to power.

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Jewish Emigration in 1975

About 13,000 Soviet Jews were granted permission to leave for Israel this year, according to Dutch officials who represent Israeli interests in Moscow. The figure is 35 percent below the 1974 total and 60 percent below the record number allowed to emigrate in 1973.

Despite Moscow's statements to the contrary, the decline in emigration since 1973 is the result of a conscious Soviet effort to hold back the flow. Moscow appears committed to a restrictive policy for a variety of reasons, including US congressional efforts to couple trade and emigration, concern about relations with the Arabs, and the implications of free emigration for internal security.

Emigration has also been slowed by adverse perceptions by Soviet Jews of conditions in Israel since the 1973 Middle East war. These perceptions, which are based on information received from Israeli friends and relatives, have been encouraged by a steady stream of Soviet propaganda intended to discourage emigration. Many would-be emigrants are evidently deferring a decision in hope that international conditions, as well as Soviet emigration policy, will eventually moderate.

In the meantime, large numbers of Jewish emigrants continue to choose destinations other than Israel once they are out of the USSR. In November, for example, approximately a third of the 1,300 Soviet Jews arriving in Vienna with exit permits for Israel decided to settle in other countries.

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High-Level Romanian-Yugoslav Exchanges

Two visits last week by high-ranking Romanian and Yugoslav officials should help to squelch rumors that problems between Bucharest and Belgrade forced the cancellation of President Ceausescu's trip to Yugoslavia in October.

The visits, by Yugoslav Foreign Minister Minic to Bucharest and by Romanian Foreign Trade Minister Patan to Belgrade, came on the heels of Ceausescu's forceful reassertion on December 18 of Romania's independent foreign policy. Ceausescu had underscored the similarities between Belgrade and Bucharest on a variety of issues, including their mutual determination to resist Soviet claims to leadership of the international Communist movement.

Both communiqus summarizing the talks stressed the "complete trust" and "warm friendship" existing between the two Balkan neighbors. The substance of the talks between Minic and his Romanian counterpart, George Macovescu, has not been revealed, but Minic probably briefed the Romanians on his recent trip to Moscow, where he discussed Soviet meddling in Yugoslav internal affairs and other important bilateral issues. Patan's talks in Belgrade produced a trade agreement for the period 1976-80 and a commodity trade protocol for the coming year.

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Yugoslavs Announce Dapcevic Arrest

Following several months of rumors, Belgrade last Friday for the first time announced that Vladimir Dapcevic, a pro-Soviet, anti-Tito emigre, is under arrest in Yugoslavia. The announcement may presage wider publicity on the activities of the cominformists and, hence, higher tensions in Soviet-Yugoslav relations.

Dapcevic disappeared last August while in Bucharest. [Redacted]

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[Redacted] Friday's press announcement said that Dapcevic was "arrested on the territory of our country while carrying out hostile activity." Belgrade did not reveal when Dapcevic was apprehended.

Foreign Minister Minic's visit to Bucharest [Redacted] after the Soviets had refused to budge further on the cominformists during Minic's visit to Moscow almost certainly cleared the way for the press release on Dapcevic. Dapcevic lived in the USSR in the early and mid-60s before moving--with Soviet permission--to Western Europe. [Redacted]

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